

Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs

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LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Adam Weiss, Chairman



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Prize Winning Poems
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Cathedral Aisles

In dim cathedral aisles
their Souls have built.
Weary ones do sometimes steal away
And hide them from the garish light of day.
 Youthful dreams and fancies
 here their wings unfold,
Here Hope dares hope,
 and Faith grows bold!
The Soul its censer swings,
 and incense sweet fills all the air!
 To live is love—
 To breathe is prayer!
Not long indeed they stay
For Life, insistent, murmurs:
 “Come away.”
Oh, Lord—from storm and stress,
Life's battle and duress—
They do not ask release
 But only pray
That they may never lose the way
Into these Aisles of Peace.

Clio Club, Pueblo,
MARTHA CHAPPEL.

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Night in a Prairie Town

We live in a bare little town on the plain
 Yet we have a tree, or two,
And even a cottonwood's leaves are lace
 At night when the moon shines through.

We live in a dry little town on the plain
 No marshes dewy and damp,
Yet at night there's a hint of the will-o-the-wisp
 In each twinkling auto lamp.

We live in a hot little town on the plain
 Summer days are a blaze of light,
But a velvet sky with close-hung stars
 And a cool breeze, comes with night.

The church in our good little town on the plain
 Has pillars of drab cement,
Night turns them to marble of classic mold
 'Neath a Grecian pediment.

Our home in the faraway town on the plain
 Lacks many things, it is true,
But it's home of my heart when the day's work is done
 And night, O my darling, brings you.

Round Table Club, Lamar.
MAY WILLIAMS WARD.

The Wanderer

Oh, friend of mine, to you my thots are turning,
The time and space have parted us, and far
My feet have wandered, and the old love burning
Within my heart, has been the guiding star
Lighting my way; dear heart, sweet memories thronging
Of your kind eyes so steadfast and so true
And your unfalt'ring smile, fill me with longing
To win back o'er the weary miles to you.

No other hand has clasped my hand so kindly,
No other heart has beat so warm and true,
I looked beyond our own small world, and blindly
I chose the path leading away from you.
The path that traversed rugged, pine-clad mountains,
Or wound through vales where quiet rivers flow,
Crossed desert lands, past shadowed tropic fountains,
Or led to treasure lands where harsh winds blow.

Adventure called me! stout of heart and eager
I followed where her beckoning finger lured,
Her promises how fair, how poor and false and meager
And her rewards for all the toil endured.
I've journeyed far; my heart grows old and lonely,
I face the end of life, its sunset bars,
And my thots turn to where awaits me only
A quiet grave beneath the brooding stars.

L'Envoi

Priceless, this thing the days and years have taught me
Far hills are green, and distant valleys smile,
But life is love, with one dear face beside us,
One hand in ours to sweeten every mile.

South Denver Woman's Club,
MRS. H. E. COREY.

The Fleece of Gold

To Denver, the city which has ever been to me most hospitable, and to the many friends within her gates, this little tale of her first settler is respectfully dedicated.

When Jason, to the strains of Orpheus' lyre,
Straight into sunset turned enchanted prow
And faced the fiery beasts with dauntless brow,
He waked the slumbering spark of mad desire.
Now, ever as the sun, with slanting ray,
Falls on the huddled flocks that patient wait
For folding, outside heaven's pasture-gate,
Warming with drifted gold their coats of gray,
The hearts of men are stirred with strange unrest—
They still must seek the hidden fleece of gold,
That hangs within the dragon's dreadful hold,
There in the West, the *soul-compelling West*.

When birds were nesting and the streams ran clear,
With hope of pasture greening all the land,
In Georgia's cotton-fields men dreamed of gold
That lay, unclaimed, within the mountain's heart;
Like Jason's half-a-hundred heroes, bold,
On daring quest they start.

Late in the Spring,
When o'er the dull brown earth was softly spread
A robe of green, shot through with threads of rose,
And insects whirred on busy, tremulous wing,
A few lean Kansans joined the company.
Tall men, sun-burned, with leathern neck and arm,
Grim, silent men, who stopped to shift a trickling quid
Before reply; men whom the desert could not harm.

By day, the men moved silent, yet alert,
To strike the coiling snake and watch for haze
Of distant fire, to keep the beasts from hurt,
To track the antelope and find a spot
To camp where freshet might not overtake.

But when the crackling fire of cottonwood
Sent mystic circles far into the night,
They told again the all-engrossing tales
Of hidden gold; of cities buried from the light
For centuries, where cheapest common dish
Was from the precious metal cast.

Then one

They called "the parson" for his quiet ways,
A story of the Spanish quest began:

*"It was a Pawnee brave first brought the tale
Of wealth uncounted, in the North and West,
To colonies of Spain, rousing the lust
For gold.*

*When with the rising sap the buds
Began to swell, he led them forth, a band
Of hardy, hopeful men.*

*The summer passed;
Along the Arkansas the fallen leaves
Lay thick and dead, yet still no word to those
Who waited for the pots of gold.*

*One day,
When keen and blue was all the autumn air,
A crippled beggar, out of human form
Twisted and bent by some mischance, half-blind
With desert-glare, came to the settlement
And begged for bread. To every question still
He made reply, "Cibola, I have seen
The city of the dead!" And then they knew
Him for the piteous broken wreck of one
Who sought the fabled city in the spring.*

*No clear account of that lost caravan
He ever gave, for something so intense
Lay back of all the torture and despair,
To speak of it brought madness to his brain.*

But this the tale he told of Cibola:

*"The Indian lost the trail, or else he lied;
We wandered far afield in trackless wild
No white man's foot had ever trod. A land
Of desert, cut with interlacing seams
Where blessed water trickled from the sand.
A few lost men, we followed still each trace
Of savage or of beast,—at every turn
We thought to see the golden city stand.*

*Alone, at last, I crept into the narrow mouth
Of a great canyon, struggling madly with
Its tangled scrub, and there I found the thing
We sought, the tomb of far-famed Cibola!*

*Within the rocky canyon's side was built
The dwelling of some vanished race. No sign
Of life was in the silent place; no gold
In heaped-up store, only rude implements
Of stone, a few dried grains of yellow maize
Upon the floor.*

*In rage I stumbled on until I came
Upon a cave where sunken pots of clay
Adorned with feathers, stood in solemn row;
'Now for the gold!' I cried, and overturned
The smallest in my way. A few dried bones,
A tiny skull, some clumsy playthings
Rattled out with awful thud.*

*My blood
That late had surged with angry heat, ran cold
And froze within me at the sight I saw:
Beside the burial-pots a woman crouched,
Unburied and alone, no hand to soothe
Her last death-agony, no child to bring
The food and water to her side, no mate
To lay her shrunken form away—herself
The last of all her world . . .
Still watching for a footstep at the door—*

*I turned and fled from the accursed spot,
Friends, I have seen the WOMAN GOD FORGOT!"*

The "parson" bowed his head and spoke no more,
The fire burned low, and still the haunting howl
Of hungry coyotes pierced the chilly air;
In silent reverie they sat, the spell
Of that dead woman on them still.

Next day, a band of friendly Cherokees
Came up with gifts of fresh-killed antelope,
In token of good-will. By pipes and beads
Beguiled, they lingered with the caravan.
But there were some who shook their grizzled heads
And muttered, sullen, underneath their breath,
Of treacherous guides and wanton massacre;
And then they spoke of *Humana* again,
How as he slept, the red men lit the circle
Dread, of flame, about his helpless camp;
And only one escaped that holocaust,
And he, by strategy of Indian maid.

These murmurs reached the watchful leader's ear
And led to council round the evening fire.

Thus *Russell* spoke: "The Indians know the way,
They know the springs, the treacherous river-beds,
They know the mountain-trails, the gulches where
The nuggets big as hailstones lie—"
('Or punkins, sir,' a hopeful Kansan cried.)
"Who knows what treachery Humana first
To red man showed, what spark of hate he lit
To kindle his own funeral-pyre? No fear
Have I of red man, unbetrayed, in short,
The Cherokees shall stay!"

Right cunningly,
Of their red comrades, day by day, they sought
Some clue to hidden gold, picking up along
Their path the shining stones, then holding up
A well-filled pipe, as pay for such.

At length
The purple shoulders of the mountain heaved
From out the tedious plain, kindling their eyes
With glad expectancy.

An Indian youth
Sped on before, spurring his fleet mustang
Toward the distant hills. Two days they travelled
Ere the brave returned and sought the tall white chief.
With great delight, a yellow aspen leaf
He showed, by summer's alchemy too soon
Transmuted into gold.

"Plenty, plenty gold,
Soon the Great Spirit make upon the hills!"
He cried.

Then all the gladness in him died
At their contemptuous smile.

The red men smoked
About their council-fire till late that night
And with the morning brought "Four-fingered Joe,"
A half-breed who could speak the white man's tongue.
The old chief squatted by the fire and spoke,
And thus "Four-Fingered Joe" interpreted:

*"The white man ever cries for gold, more gold,
That word the first the redman learn to speak;
Gold the Great Spirit gives, he values not,
Nor for the gold of ripened maize he seeks.
But he would rend the shivering mountain's heart
To find the demon-gold hid deep."*

This, then,

The red men say:

*Two sleeps the mountains lie
Away. The red man may not go to demon-gold
But he will point the way."* . . .

The old chief rose and silent stood as if
In doubt or grief; in sudden passion, then,
He raised his arms and swayed to rhythmic chant:

*"I hear the Great Spirit,
He mutters in anger,
The storm-cloud He mounts,
His breath goes before Him,
The trees bend and sway:
He seizes his bow
And His great gleaming arrow,
The rock's heart He smites.*

*"Go, follow the dart
From the bow of the Spirit,
The angry Great Spirit
Who rides on the storm;
There shall the gold
Of the demon lie bare;
The wrath of the Smiter is on it,
Beware!"* . . .

In silence, grim, the Cherokees mounted
And rode away.

The Georgians and the Kansans panned the streams
Between them and the range; the Fountain
And the Platte; a few small grains of glittering dust
For guerdon of their toil. Far as the eye
Could see the solitary plains were set
To purple harmonies and many a tuft
Of grass a crown of creamy yucca wore.
But they were men of purpose, stern, and came
Not there to dream in mountain majesties;
And ever as the flakes of gold eluded still
Their touch, the men grew restive, spoke
Of home and women waiting for them there.

By Cherry Creek a Kansan spoke his mind.

"There is no gold in this vile land," he said,
A country fit for coyotes or for Injun breed;
These barren plains can never feed a man
Nor pay his sweat with bread!"

At dawn,

A score of disappointed men rode to the south.

The few who still remained toiled on, ranging
The creeks on either hand with feverish haste;
With eyes that noted not the blossoms crushed
Beneath their feet; with ears that hearkened not
To soaring meadow-lark, or her alarm
At jarring human voice within that solitude.
But not one nugget in their pans at night
Bade hope live on. With patient eyes that spoke
Dumb question, still they looked to him who led
Their quest, then laid them down to troubled sleep.

The warm June night slept silently and fair,
God's peace upon it like a mantle laid,
The great range brooded, watchful and aware
Of mystic shifting shadows o'er it played.

Before the dying fire *Russell* bowed,
In agony of thought as deep as prayer,
And through the depths of that dark cloud
Of anguished doubt, he caught a vision fair:

He caught the Pale-Face Gold, a phantom, glide
Through many a gulch and hidden dell,
But as she fled, her yellow cloak spread wide
And on the barren plains it fell;
He saw a city rise with mart and spire,
Where teeming life passed swiftly to and fro,
He saw the waters flow by man's desire
To feed the fertile plains below.

The fire died; the faithful few slept on.
Now *Russell* rose and faced the kindling dawn;
The peaks caught up a hint of rosy gleam,
And blushed through all their sparkling veils of snow;
Around him played dim phantoms of his waking dream.

With many a grimace, now, and muttered oath,
By sun's first rays aroused, the men awoke
And saw their leader standing, silent, loth
To break the spell of mystery upon him laid
By that night's phantasy.

“We stay,” he said,
“If only one will bear me company!”

The red man's gold still on the aspen gleams,
The white man's gold is washed from shifting sand,
And over all that once forsaken land
The Spirit-gold of ripened grain now streams.
A city stands with sunlit dome and spire,
Fair gleaner with her golden sheaves complete,
Like Ruth, she nestles at the mountain's feet;
As Russell saw her by his dying fire,
The night his troubled soul found hope and peace,
And saw, afar, the winning of the fleece.

Woman's Club, Colorado Springs,
MRS. L. A. MILLER.

Beauty for Ashes

Beauty for ashes: 'tis a gracious gift
To world-worn hearts by grief and care bent down,
Crushed by despair and hatred's sullen frown.
Our spirits quicken with a great uplift
When faith presents the garland to our eyes
And bids us wear it, even now and here,
Taking life lightly, smiling through our fear,
Looking for joy in every vain disguise.

Beauty of spring's soft rain and summer skies,
Beauty of autumn flame and winter streams,
Beauty of word and deed and children's eyes
Beauty of life and death—prophetic dreams
Of wind-flung ashes from the sad world shed,
And Beauty's crown triumphant on its head.

City Federation, Colorado Springs.
MISS FONETTA FLANSBURG.

When Sara Comes

(To Sarah Sabina McFall)

When Sara comes into the room
She brings the sense of summer skies
And fragrant drifting clover-bloom;
And joy, like dancing butterflies
Lights soft within the tired eyes,
When Sara comes.
Gone, all at once, all thought of gloom
E'en Fate goes smiling to his loom
And slyly weaves a sweet surprise,
When Sara comes.

MRS. L. A. MILLER.

The Mystery of Mind

Science traces man's ascent from primordial cell,
And learnedly proclaiming the powers that impel—
Familiar with the forces that govern earth's domain,
Has even sought the secrets of the heavens to explain.
Not all the wealth of knowledge of sage and seer combined
May solve life's greatest problem—"the mystery of mind."
Nor can the mighty forces with which the world is rife,
Reveal arcana of the soul, or tell us what is life.

The brain is heaven's dynamo, within the human mold,
And here alone may heaven's truth, to human life unfold;
From out its countless corridors what myriad thoughts arise,
Seeking to compass earth and heaven, beyond the realm of skies;
Striving to know the Infinite—to comprehend the plan
That governs all the world of space and reigns supreme in man.
As earth is the foundation on which creature life may rest,
So the brain is the receptacle for all that makes man blest.

All of purity and peace, of happiness and love;
All that finite man may know of the Infinite above;
All that molds the life of man in image of his God;
All that lifts humanity above the senseless clod,
Love and wisdom, living forces, heaven's heat and light,
Luminating mental darkness, dissipating night.
These indeed are mighty magnets, lifting up the soul
Far beyond disease and death, to life's higher goal.

Only in perverted good is love consuming fire;
Only blindest falsity does truth fail to inspire.
Sin is violation of divinely given law—
Disease can only enter where sin has left a flaw.
In seeking resurrection to new and higher life,
Alleviating suffering, disease and pain and strife,
We must destroy this monster within whose slimy fold
The germs of greed and selfishness their forms of evil hold.

The Great Physician, while on earth, and doing good alway,
Gave sight to blinded eyes of man, anointing them with clay;
Thus using earth's material to teach us application
Of nature's potent remedy for Nature's restoration.
We may not know her forces, or comprehend her laws,
Nor even may we yet explain the great dynamic cause,
But if we yield obedience to heaven's wiser power,
From out affliction's gloomy clouds will richest blessings shower.

The universe has no new law from human mind evolved,
By means of heaven's search-light life's mysteries are solved;
Whenever man is ready for higher revelation,
The Lord prepares the medium for his emancipation.
A master mind arises from out the darkened night,
To bear aloft to suffering man a shining beacon light.
Though buried in the ashes of falsity and doubt,
Eternal truths of heaven must soon or late shine out.

"I was blind, but now I see," is human declaration;
So every truth like leaves of trees for healing of the nation,
Comes to our blinded eyes, and we proclaim that truth as new,
Which was from all eternity to everlasting true.
As gold and silver of the earth which human toil discovers,
So heaven's riches may be found beyond the cloud that hovers,
If with a pure and honest heart we live the truth to know,
For only in the life of good can heaven's blessings flow.

'Tis not enough that we in thought should soar to realms of bliss—
Unmindful of the kindly deed, what joys we often miss!
Every life is woven close with the life of every other;
The Lord of heaven our Father is, and every man our brother.
We cannot live a selfish life and find a lasting pleasure,
For heaven's benedictions are fitted to our measure.
Humanity is as a man on whom affliction falls,
No part can ever be destroyed without affecting all.

And when the mind is clouded with malady of sin,
Till scarce one little ray of light can penetrate within,
All life's generating forces pure from the fountain head,
Men perverts to his destruction, choosing death instead.
Diseases of the human mind in all their varied forms,
Are but outward demonstration of spiritual storms
Of evil and of falsity, destroying life's frail bark,
Because we will not seek the light that leads us to the ark.

It seems a mystery sublime, no earthly power may solve,
How from this mental chaos shall higher life evolve.
God created Nature's temple, and gave to man the key,
With this solemn declaration—"the truth shall make you free."
In vain we grasp the forces of scientific thought,
If the living truth be wanting, these forces count for naught;
And only when man chooses that love and wisdom reign,
Can earth be free from sorrow, from suffering and pain.

How zealously we strive to guard this bit of human clay,
Employing every effort to save it from decay.
'Tis but the cast-off garment we put away from sight,
The worn-out habitation whence loved ones take their flight
From mortal forms that held them bound in sorrow, pain and strife;
Beyond the shoals and shadows of this meager earthly life,
Into God's eternal sunshine, where in light unfettered, free,
Our dear ones wait to welcome us to love's eternity.

'Tis well to guard this temple so oft with danger fraught,
But wiser yet to cleanse the life's affection and its thought;
For only in perverted life disease can find its food,
Since every form of evil is but perverted good.
The will and understanding are attributes of mind,
But if they are distorted, man's reason then is blind;
And when by some strange fantasy he slays his fellow man,
We truly say insanity has placed him under ban.

But every human being who causes needless pain,
May also truthfully be classed with him who is insane.
Envy, bickerings and malice, with all the ills that grovel,
Create the mind's bacteria and make its home a hovel.
The material bacilli from which we shrink in terror,
Are thought by some to be the cause, while others note the error,
And see in these small microbes disease's dread effect,
Caused by the mind's corruption from spiritual neglect.

Material creation, in God's eternal plan,
Can never be the cause of malady in man.
Causes are eternal, and beyond our mental ken,
Effects are of creation, and ever thus have been.
Have you not watched the crystal stream, pure from the mountain flow,
Then followed on its winding course to depths far, far below,
Where mighty raging torrent with destruction in its path,
Seemed like some living monster, exulting in its wrath?

Though we may not stay the current at its far distant source,
We can renovate the channel through which its waters course;
Thus may the ever living stream flow peacefully and calm,
When life's temple has been cleansed by love's pure-healing balm.
When planted in the garden by Eden's peaceful stream,
Surrounded by the hallowed light of love's celestial beam,
Man was happy in his haven till selfishness crept in,
But good can have no dwelling place with selfishness and sin.

When self-love holds the citadel with all its evil train,
Why wonder that affliction, disease and death should reign?
Rather let us wonder that we harbor such a guest,
To steal away our peace of mind—our paradise of rest.
And yet the good predominates, though human eyes may trace
Great scars and deep afflictions on Nature's smiling face;
For man is not all evil, and mind not all corrupt,
From the truth's attenuations has nature often supped.

If from the higher potencies we love to come and drink,
The time will come when there will be no ill from which to shrink;
And the fruitage in the garden of the blessed promised land,
Will far transcend our highest thought, and all our visions grand.
We say the mind is that which lives when earth-life is no more;
But we do seek most earnestly her palaces to store
With the precious goods and truths our Father waits to give,
As foretaste of the future life, to teach us how to live?

A glimpse we get of paradise beyond earth's misty maze,
When from this prison-house of clay the soul attuned to praise
Unites with the angelic throng at life's celestial shrine,
In singing love's triumphant song of harmony divine.
When from the heights we vision the land of perfect day,
The glories of eternity seem not so far away.
To find the life immortal, our true and only guide
Must be the ever living God—in Him we must abide.

The loved ones who have left us and journeyed on before
Are waiting for our coming, just beyond the open door
In God's celestial garden of beauty and of truth,
Where age, transplanted, grows again to everlasting youth.
When we have crossed the border beyond the bars of time,
Then shall we know and understand the mystery sublime,
And join the great redemption song where love's delight is pure,
For all the ills of human life heaven holds the law of cure.

Woman's Club of Denver,
DR. LILLIAN POLLOCK.

Colorado in October

There's a whispered rustle, rustle in the depths of woodland trees,
And a softly murmured chorus from the sylvan green of leaves,
For the elves with brush and palette swing their strokes with
vibrant skill,

Touching some with softest colors, splotching others with a will,
For each tree must add its quota to the beauty brimming over
In the mountain, field and valley—Colorado in October.

The quaking aspens tremble in an attitude supine
As they flaunt their wealth of yellow to the somber of the pine,
And the sides of sloping mountains are like Joseph's coat of old,
With their many colored patches of the red and brown and gold,
And the purple of the daisy's fringe the streamlets bubbling over
With the wine of Autumn gladness—Colorado in October.

Shaggy grain stacks in the valley look like nuggets of pure gold,
And the brown of earth's fall ploughing falls in furrows fold on fold,
While the lakes like sparkling sapphires call the wild ducks there
to rest,
And the clouds are flying white doves, nestling on the mountain's
crest,
While belated summer hare-bell rings its chimes to nodding clover,
Oh, there's spice in Nature's music—Colorado in October.

Winter-capped the snowy ranges glisten 'gainst the azure sky,
Flinging back a proud defiance to the cloud-birds floating by,
And the purple mists are draping all the hills in shadow light,
While the brown and gold of valleys feel its veil upon their sight,
And the sunset's crimson fingers, drawing evening shadows over,
Drape a starry curtain 'round us—Colorado in October.

Daughters of Colorado, Denver,
RUTH LEES OLSON.

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